

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-6, 20 and 21 are pending herein. Claim 21 has been added as supported by, for example, page 19, paragraph [0031] of the original specification.

Claims 1-6 and 20 were rejected under §102(b) over Shahid. New dependent claim 21 has been added to further distinguish the present application over Shahid. For example, new claim 21 recites that the ribbon portion comprises a material that can be stripped to expose the polarization-maintaining fibers. Applicants respectfully submit that none of the structures in Shahid (such as the plug 22) on which the PTO is relying is made of a material that can be stripped in advance of securing the optical fibers in a coupling device (such as coupling device 20 shown in Fig. 2 of Shahid). Accordingly, new claim 21 provides further patentable distinctions over Shahid.

The Examiner was requested to confirm receipt and consideration of the IDS filed March 11, 2002 and the July 29, 2003 Amendment. In addition, the Examiner is requested to confirm receipt and consideration of the IDS filed July 31, 2003.

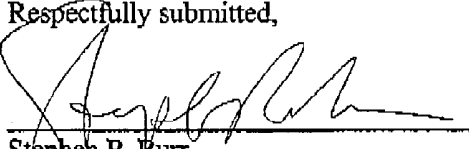
If the Examiner believes that contact with Applicants' attorney would be advantageous toward the disposition of this case, the Examiner is herein requested to call Applicants' attorney at the phone number noted below.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees associated with this communication or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 50-1446.

Respectfully submitted,

September 5, 2003

Date


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